



CHINA • YUNNAN



BELT AND ROAD

Construction continues on China-Laos railway

Construction of the China-Laos railway linking Vientiane, capital of Laos, and Southwest China's Yunnan province, has improved the lives of Lao people along the railway.

Song Wei, head of a small village near the major bridges crossing the Mekong River along the railway, said incomes have been on the rise since construction began.

"After the China Railway No.8 Engineering Group came, they helped us build roads and hired villagers to work on the construction site," he said. Song himself has opened a restaurant to serve construction workers and passersby.

Constructors built a pioneer road of more than 100 kilometers, linking the

village to Luang Prabang, a city in Laos. Some villagers have bought motorcycles or small trucks since the road was built, Song said.

The China-Laos railway measures 414 kilometers in length, and is considered a key connectivity project in the Belt and Road Initiative.

The operating speed of trains on the route is designed to be 160 kilometers

per hour. The railway is expected to be fully operational in December 2021.

Xi Shao, a 30-year-old interpreter working at the construction site by the Mekong, said many of his friends and relatives have asked him about the railway, and that they want to visit China after the railway opens.

Xi studied Chinese in Yunnan province for five

years before he returned to Laos in 2012. "It would be the first time for me to take a train," Xi said of the completion of the project.

After the China-Laos railway comes into service, the journey from Mohan in Yunnan province to Vientiane will take three hours, while currently it takes about 16 hours by car.

(China Daily)

Fuxing bullet trains to operate automatically at 350 km/h



Photo by Xinhua

Lu Dongfu, general manager of China Railway Corporation, revealed at a working conference on January 2nd that the corporation is developing a train control system that will allow Fuxing bullet trains to operate at speeds of 300 to 350 kilometres per hour. The technology, not yet available anywhere else in the world, will first be applied to the trains running between Beijing and Zhangjiakou.

With the automatic train operation (ATO) system, according to China Academy of Railway Sciences, the driver just needs to push a start button and the trains can automatically depart, operate, adjust the running time as scheduled, stop at stations, and open and close passenger doors.

Experts emphasized that a train over-speed protection system will monitor all the automatic operations to ensure driving safety. The ATO system will maintain consistent driving operations.

Even if the drivers' skills may vary, the trains will be able to operate accurately as scheduled, thus improving the transportation capacity.

By the end of 2017, China's high-speed rail increased to more than 25,000 km, accounting for 66.3 percent of the world's total. It is estimated that the country's high-speed rail tracks will hit 38,000 km by 2025. (Science and Technology Daily)

POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Ginkgo trees help lift Tengchong villagers out of poverty

The Jiangdong ginkgo village in Tengchong, Baoshan of Yunnan province, is golden in winter. Ginkgo trees full of yellow leaves paint a beautiful landscape, attracting tourists from home and abroad.

The ginkgo village has over 10-thousand-mu ginkgo forest with over 30,000 plants, among which the oldest is about 1,300 years old. Besides ginkgo trees, there are various karst caves and valleys around the village.

Back to about 10 years ago, the ginkgo village has 2,520 people living in poverty, accounting for 70% of its total population. In 2007, with the guidance and help of local government, eight households started to develop agritainment businesses. Since then, villagers have engaged

in businesses including hostels, commodity sales and delicacy. Through developing agritourism, the poverty population has been reduced to 39. In 2017, the village received 360,000 tourists, and the tourism revenue totaled 48 million yuan.

Local embroidery industry has also developed. More than 500 female villagers engage in the business and their works are sold inside and outside the province. They have gained an average annual income of four million yuan. Besides, the crafts of baking and drying have helped the price of ginkgo fruit increase from around 10 yuan to about 80 to 100 yuan per kilogram, producing an annual output value of more than 5 million yuan in the village.

(Liu Ziyu)

KALEIDOSCOPE

Floral castle breaks world record



The Floral Castle and **The Beanstalk Tower** constructed by Yunnan Expo Gardening Company are recognized by Guinness World Records as the largest floral building structure and the tallest plant landscape tower on January 1. "The Floral Castle" which breaks the largest floral building structure record covers an area of 544 square meters and stands 22 meters high. "The Beanstalk Tower" measures 24 meters in height.

Photo by Han Chengyuan

TRAVEL

Internet plus tourism helps Yunnan people live a better life

"At the Kunming western toll station, the ETC lanes are unimpeded. The payment is automatically made through WeChat, and we can enjoy dual discounts. It's awesome!" commented a netizen by the name of Rattle & Hum on the non-contact mobile payment after a post of the WeChat public account "Yunnan at Your Fingertips". This is just one of the stories about how Internet Plus Tourism helps improve people's quality of life.

In 2017, Yunnan province launched the "Yunnan at Your Fingertips" project and accelerated the development of Internet Plus Tourism. On December 26, 2017, Yunnan Tengyun Information Industry Co., Ltd. was established and began to focus on the development and platform operation of "Yunnan at Your Fingertips". As China's first provincial all-for-one

tourism service management platform, "Yunnan at Your Fingertips" led the construction of the country's smart tourism ecosystems.

After the joint efforts in the past year, the platform not only played an important role in the integrated development, transformation and upgrading of the cultural tourism industry, but also brought tangible benefits to the local people and tourists by connecting the industry with people's

wellbeing.

The ETC plus non-contact payment is a new way of paying highway tolls first introduced in Yunnan province through "Yunnan at Your Fingertips". Now over 5,000 non-contact payment users are active on highways every day.

"Yunnan at Your Fingertips" boasts a tourism big data centre, two platforms, three tourism application ports and five systems. (Chu Donghua and Li Hengqiang)



A tourist is scanning QR code in Stone Forest scenic spot. Photo by Li Hengqiang

REFORM AND OPENING UP

Kunming airport offers 144-hour visa-free transit



A foreign passenger (middle) poses for a photo after being offered the 144-hour visa free transit. Photo by Han Chengyuan

Starting January 1st, Kunming airport began to implement the 144-hour visa-free transit policy.

The new policy allows eligible foreigners to enjoy visa-free transit as long as they hold valid international travel documents and onward flight tickets to a third country (region) with confirmed departure time and seat within 144 hours upon arrival. The countries to enjoy the policy are the same as the 53 countries already enjoying 72-hour visa-free transit.

To save the border control waiting time and facilitate customs clearance for visa-free transit passengers, and enable them to better enjoy their 144-hour stay in the city, the Kunming Station of Immigration Inspection (KSII) has set up a special inspection passage and updated the bulletin boards and electronic displays. Additionally, the KSII has communicated and interpreted the policy to airlines and organised relevant trainings for safe and smooth customs clearance.

(Han Chengyuan)



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